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DROSS

A Strange Drama of American Life

IN FOUR ACTS

By
**EDMUND
WHEATLEY**

Author of
"Two Daughters of
the Confederacy,"
Etc.

1907



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CHARACTERS

<i>WILL YORK,</i>	
<i>JAMES,</i>	His Brother
<i>JESSIE COLE,</i>	
<i>BESSIE LAKE,</i>	Her Friend
<i>ISABELLE STAPLETON,</i>	An Actress
<i>WARD,</i>	A Friend of Will's
<i>ROGERS,</i>	A Capitalist and Promoter
<i>FERGUSON,</i>	A Private Banker and Broker
<i>BLADWORTH,</i>	A Wall Street Broker
<i>GUSTAVE,</i>	A Child
<i>MRS. OILBY,</i>	From Fort Worth, Texas
<i>MRS. STOCKER,</i>	From Chicago, Illinois
<i>MRS. RUNYAN,</i>	From Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
<i>MISS SINGLETON,</i>	From New York
<i>COUNT GEORG ALADAR HAVELKA,</i>	
	Of the Royal Hungarian Horse Guards
<i>MRS. WYLIE,</i>	Housekeeper
<i>FANNIE,</i>	A Maid
<i>JOHN,</i>	A Man Servant
<i>SIMPSON,</i>	An English Valet

DROSS

ACT I.

SCENE. *Sitting room in the York home, in Muncie, Ind. Tables, books, bric-a-brac, statuary; a statue of St. Patrick on top of book case. Smoking materials lying around. The room should show that it is the living room of two young men and their aged mother. A chess table with men on it. Fannie discovered tidying up room.*

Enter MRS. WYLIE.

Mrs. W. Oh! Good morning, Fannie!

Fan. Good morning, Mrs. Wylie, ma'am.

Mrs. W. That's right. Give this room a thorough dusting. There's that statoo of the blessed St. Patrick, now, that young Mr. James York brought home from his trip to the Ould Counthry, and stuck up here for an ornament, amongst thim naken heathen gods and god-desses. Think shame on him! Ye want to be after keeping *him* clane, or he'll be setting the fairies after you.

Fan. Oh!

Mrs. W. Yis. And Mrs. York will be after you wid a sharp stick, begorra! For if there's anything she do hate, 'tis not havin' her house clane and nate. The last girl lost her place—the place you've got—for nothin' mor'n a little speck o' dust on the pianny. Not that Mrs. York maybe would have noticed it herself, but that young divil of a bye of mine, Mr. Will York, went and wrote "rats" with his finger in the dust, and of course, that called her attintion to it, as the sayin' is.

Fan. Boy of yours, ma'am?

Mrs. W. Yis. I calls him bye of mine. Ye see, he's the eldest of the two brothers, Will and Jim, and I was first taken on as his nurse whin he was a kid, so I've called him me bye ever since. A foine young mahn he is now, begorry. But a terrible toime he led me, when he was younger. Sure, it's knows his own mind he does, if no one ilse does, and git it he will, or the divil's to pay entirely.

Fan. Oh! That's the way with the men, Mrs. Wylie.

Mrs. W. Go long! What do you know about the min?

Fan. (*Bridling*). Indeed, ma'am——

Mrs. W. Think shame of yourself! But min or no min, you mind what I say, and don't you let Mr. Will come monkeying around you, for he's just that kind of a young omadhoun, he fears neither God nor man, and anything wid a petticoat he considers fair game. Och, he do be the very divil of a felly among the women. So you'd just better steer clear of him, or, dust or no dust, off you goes!

Fan. Oh! Sure, ma'am! I won't have a word to say to him! I swear be the blessed St. Patrick!

Mrs. W. 'Twill be the better for you, if ye don't. But here comes Mr. James.

Enter JAMES.

Good morning, sor!

James. Good morning, Wylie. Any mail?

Mrs. W. Yis, sor! Wan letter. (*Hands letter.*)

James (*Taking*). From Mr. Rogers. Oh! If I only had his money, Wylie——

Mrs. W. Yis, sor?

James. I'd endow ten hospitals——

Mrs. W. Och! Bedad!

James. And six orphan asylums——

Mrs. W. Oh! Mr. York, sor!

James. And build a cathedral to the (*points*) blessed St. Patrick! (*Laughs.*)

Mrs. W. Oh! sure, Mr. York, you're the ginerous gentleman, *that* ye are, sor! (*Clasps hands.*)

James. But—I haven't got his money.

Mrs. W. The more's the pity, sor!

James. So, I guess I'll just read what he has to say to me. (*Opens letter and reads.*) *Dear James; Please call and see me tomorrow (that's today) at ten a. m. I am prepared to close up that deal with you if you are ready.—John Rogers.* Well, I'll go, and I guess I'll go in with him. Everything he touches turns to gold. I hope this will. Where's Will?

Mrs. W. Faith, I expect he's abed. He never do be up, at this time in the morning. Sure, it's only noine o'clock.

James. Lazy brute. Go and call him, Wylie. There's a good soul. Tell him I have to meet a man at ten o'clock, and that I want to see him before I go.

Mrs. W. I will, sir. (*Exit.*)

James. And I suppose I may as well take a book and read. I

bet a dollar he won't be down for an hour. (*To Fannie.*) Tell Mr. York he'll find me in the library, please. (*Exit.*)

Fan. Yes, sir! (*Clasps hand over mouth.*) Oh! and how shall I tell him! Me that swore I wouldn't have a word to say to him! (*Continues dusting.*)

Enter WILL, FANNIE dusts industriously.

Will. Good morning, Annie! Where's brother James? (*Fannie pretends not to hear. He goes up and pulls her round by the sleeve.*) Hello! It's not Annie. A new girl! (*She tries to pull away. He pulls her back.*) Do you know Mr. James? (*She nods her head.*) Where is he? (*She points to library door.*) What's the matter with the girl? Deaf and dumb? Where's your tongue? (*She shakes head. He takes her by the chin, opens her mouth, looks in.*) Got a tongue, all right! (*Kisses her on the open mouth, and exit into library.*)

Fan. (*Remains standing with mouth wide open. Then brings it shut with a snap.*) Well, of all the young men I ever knew, he do beat 'em all to a—frizzle. Now, howly St. Patrick! What can ye do wid a man like that? But, however, yer Howliness, ye'll take notice I didn't say a word to him, but if he ever does that again (*shaking her duster at St. Patrick*) and you don't shtop him, I'll, I'll—keep me mouth shut. That's what I'll do. (*Exit.*)

WILL and JAMES heard talking loudly in library.

Enter WILL noisily followed by JAMES.

Will. No! No! No! Damn it! I tell you No! All your life you have tried to run counter to my wishes, but I insist on having my way in this stock proposition.

James. Darn few times in your life you didn't get your own way, in spite of right or decency, but this time I tell you, Will, I am determined to sell our interest in the gas works, no matter what you say.

Will. Yes, and to my worst enemy, who will throw me out of my job as soon as he gets control, just for spite.

James. That's your affair. I expect you can get another.

Will. You know perfectly well I can't—not as good as this; and not in this town.

James. Well, you have your own wildness to thank for it, that you have had to cling on to your job, through the financial interest in the gas company, that dad left to mother during her lifetime, in trust with me. Yes, and the fact that he left me, the younger

brother, trustee during her life, instead of you, even though your interest (if mother should die before us) is equal to mine, shows very plainly that he had more faith in my judgment than yours. And now I have finally made up my mind. The gas works are a bad investment. Several of my friends have advised me to sell while I have a chance. I shall be guided by them.

Will. They advised you to sell some years back—yet you didn't, and the stock isn't any lower now.

James. Things are different now.

Will. Yes, I know what things are different. I know what you are doing it for. You want to drive me out of town.

James. Oh! Of course, I knew you'd shoot your mouth off about it and blame me.

Will. Yes, you want to get me out of the way, so you can make up to Jess.

James. That's rot!

Will. You can't cut me out, so you want to drive me out and ruin me!

James. Well, suppose it's true? What then? I don't say it is true. But if it is? What are you going to do about it?

Will. [*Impressively, stepping closer.*] You won't succeed. I'll beat you at your own game.

James. Meaning?

Will. I'll get the girl. I'll ruin you. I'll be rich, and you——

James. Yes?

Will. You'll beg me for money to live on, some day—and won't get it.

James. [*Sneeringly.*] Tut! Tut! How dramatic! Why don't you go on the stage?

Enter FANNIE.

Fan. Miss Cole! [*She looks knowingly at Will, who pays no attention to her. She tosses head and exit.*]

Enter JESSIE COLE.

Jess. Oh! Good morning, boys!

Will and James. Good morning, Jess!

Jess. Well, of all the cross-looking bears! What's the matter with you two? Been fighting?

James. Oh! Only a little brotherly quarrel.

Jess. Well! Brace up and get over it. I've come to have a good time. Going to stay today, and maybe tomorrow, too. Mother's

gone down to Cincinnati, and told me to run over and stop with Mrs. York. So you will have to look pleased and do something to entertain me.

James. Well, that's jolly!

Will. Fine! Well, what shall we do this morning? Go for a drive?

Jess. Just the thing, isn't it, Jim? It's a lovely day for a drive.

James. Yes, but I've an appointment to see a man at ten o'clock.

Jess. Oh! tomorrow will do, won't it? Go and telephone him! Tell him you have an unexpected guest. Tell him anything you like. But put it off. It's too lovely a morning to spoil with business. [*James hesitates.*] Go ahead! Go ahead, Jimmy! I'm dying to be off. Haven't been riding for a week.

James. Won't you wait till I see the man? I'll be back in half an hour.

Jess. Wait nothing. Will and I will go, won't we, Will? We'll see you at lunch.

James. [*Looking at Will.*] Go with Will, without me? Not if I can help it. All right! I'll telephone him. [*Exit.*]

Jess. [*Delightedly.*] Oh! He's jealous! He's jealous! And he looks so handsome when he's jealous!

[*Will frowns. Goes over and takes her hands.*]

Will. Give me a kiss, Jess.

Jess. Not this morning, Wee-Wee.

Will. You must.

Jess. Why must I?

Will. Because I say so!

Jess. [*Mockingly*] "Because I say so!" That settles it, doesn't it, Mr. High Mightiness! Wee-Wee *will* have his own way!

Will. Come on! Give me a kiss!

Jess. Will you be real good if I do?

Will. Oh! sure! Ain't I always good?

Jess. Good? [*Kissing him.*] You're the worst boy in town!

Will. That's why you like me.

Jess. I do believe it has something to do with it. But it isn't that I like your badness, Will, so much as that I want to make you better.

Will. Well, you never will, till you marry me.

Jess. If you don't get over your badness before marriage, I'm afraid you never will afterwards.

Will. Try me and see.

Jess. I'll think about it.

Will. All right, Jess. Now, remember, I'm in earnest. We've talked about this before and I've always meant what I said, but this time I'm more in earnest than ever. You've just got to marry me, or I'll know the reason why! [*He kisses her fiercely.*]

Jess. There, Will, that'll do. You've mussed me all up. [*Fixes her hair.*] What would James say if he came in just now?

Will. What has James to say? Aren't you mine?

Jess. Oh! no! Not quite!

Will. [*Slowly between his teeth.*] James is my brother, but if ever he gets you away from me—

Jess. Oh! Will! Don't look like that! You scare me!

Will. Jess! I tell you, sometimes I'm scared of myself.

Enter MRS. WYLIE.

Mrs. W. Your Uncle Nate is at the phone, sor, and wishes to spake wid ye! [*Exit.*]

Will. All right. I wonder where Jim went. Excuse me, Jess, for a few minutes. [*Exit.*]

Enter JAMES.

James. Well, I called the appointment off, and ordered the carriage. It'll be at the door directly. Where's Will?

Jess. He's at the phone. Your Uncle Nate called him up.

James. [*Shrugs shoulders and smiles.*] Oh! Uncle Nate!

Jess. They're always phoning each other, aren't they?

James. Yes. Just like a pair of lovers. Uncle Nate thinks Will's the whole thing and talks to him over the phone for half an hour at a time. Did you decide on somewhere to go?

Jess. No, we didn't. What would you suggest?

James. I suggest that we leave Will at the phone and that you go for a ride with me!

Jess. Oh! Jim! That would be a lark! But Will would never forgive us.

James. What do you care?

Jess. Oh! I'm afraid. But it would be such a joke. And Will is always so bound to have his own way. I almost feel like doing it, just to see him get real mad!

James. Well! Come on, then.

Jess. Oh! no! I don't believe I dare.

James. [*Takes her by the arm.*] Oh! come on! [*Lifts her out of chair, and pulls her towards door. She slowly yields, listening and smiling.*] Hurry up, Jess, if you're coming. He'll be here in a minute. [*They run off. Will heard without.*]

Will. (*Calling.*) John.

Enter WILL.

Will. John! John!! John!!!.

Enter FANNIE.

Fan. Did you call John?

Will. Yes. Tell him to hitch up the two bays in the carriage. I'm going to take Miss Cole for a drive!

Fan. Why, Mr. York! He's gone, sir!

Will. Gone? what do you mean?

Fan. He just drove off with Miss Cole and your brother.

Will. Phew! The devil!

Fan. [*Comes a little closer, looks up at him and presses lips together.*]

Will. [*Frowning slightly.*] Well, please tell Mrs. Wylie that Miss Cole will be here to spend the day.

Fan. [*Moving slowly to door.*] Yes, sir.

[*She stops, looks over shoulder, smiles, hesitates.*]

Will. Oh! go on [*Fannie whisks out in a huff.*] So! Brother Jim! This is your answer to me, is it? Defiance! It's war, not peace, you want, eh? Very well. War let it be! In business, in love, from now on, forever, so help me never to forget. I'll grip success in spite of all your plans, and *hate* shall be the power that drives my car to fortune! [*Sits down.*] I must think. I must get my plans together. I must see Ward and ask him to get me another position.

Enter WARD.

Why, Ward!

Ward. Good morning, Will!

Will. Just the man I was wanting to see! You must have dropped from the skies in answer to my wish. Some good angel must have sent you.

Ward. Not to you, old boy. The good angels have given you up, I fancy.

Will. Oh! I've reformed. I'm going to get rich!

Ward. [*Laughs.*]

Will. What's the matter?

Ward. That's rich, indeed. You get rich? Never, Bill, never. You may make money, but you'll never get rich. It'll slip through your fingers like fine flour through a sifter.

Will. I'll make enough to clog the sifter. Damn it, Ward! I tell you, I have got to make money. I have made up my mind. You know I'm pretty obstinate. I shall succeed!

Ward. Oh! You're obstinate enough, old fellow, but it needs more than that to make money nowadays. It needs a far-seeing mind, a planning head, a calculating brain.

Will. And you think I haven't got all that?

Ward. No, I'm afraid you've not.

Will. I'll prove to you that I have. [*Looks around.*] Ah! I have it. Let's have a game of chess.

Ward. [*Surprised.*] A game of chess? Oh! I don't mind. Rather early in the day, but I've nothing special to do. I'd just as soon.

[*They pull table forward, sit down to it and begin to arrange the men. Ward takes the red.*]

Will. No! The red's my color, Ward. Let me have it, please!

Ward. The red? Why so? It's all the same to me.

[*They change colors.*]

Will. Red! Yes! It is the color of life; of force; of strength. White is the symbol of all that is opposite to my desires and ambitions. [*Leans elbow on table and contemplates board.*] Did it ever occur to you, Ward, how the game of chess almost exactly typifies the game of life?

Ward. Why, no! Can't say it ever did.

Will. Each move upon this board represents, we may say, an action in one's life. Some men move by impulse, and win or lose by what seems accident or luck. Some move, after long thought and calculation, of the far-reaching effects that it will have on the game. Every move you make on this board carries with it a thousand possible combinations. One wrong move now, may, through its results on many future moves, bring, in the end, loss of the game—or in life, failure. You make a certain move of your own free will. You think you are free, but are you? For instance, you move this pawn, I this, you this. I take it. It is the King's gambit. I am forced to follow your lead so far. But now you move your Knight. My free will has returned. I can choose between several counter moves. Yet my whole game is affected by your opening gambit. But now, I sit and ponder. I look ahead. I plan. I concentrate my thought and will on ultimate success. I see where, here and there, I can win an advantage over you. At last I move. [*He moves.*] There! Unless the unforeseen or unexpected happens—you will be mate in twenty moves! I tell you, Ward, in life, as in chess, the greatest success will always come to him, as you said awhile ago, who can see and plan the greatest number of moves

ahead—aye, and also to him, of iron will, who is determined that his combinations will succeed.

Ward. Yes, I guess you're right, old man.

Will. And as the game of chess typifies the game of life, so he who plays a good game in one *has it in him*, I say, to play a good game in the other! Don't you agree with me, Ward?

Ward. Well, maybe so, maybe so.

[They continue to move slowly as they converse.]

Will. *[Suddenly.]* Say, Ward, can you get me a job?

Ward. What! Have you lost your soft snap at the gas works?

Will. Yes, I've lost my job, or will, in a short time. Can you get me another—at the foundry. A good one? I'm willing to work, but I want good pay.

Ward. My dear fellow, to tell you the truth, I don't think I can do a thing for you—

Will. *[Shortly.]* I see. You think I am down and out—

Ward. Now, now, Will York, don't be an ass! You know I'd do anything I could for you, but you know I'm not the high mucky muck at the foundry. Uncle Bob's the boss, and you know how he feels towards you. He thinks you're too much on the girl, too little on the meeting house proposition.

Will. Yes! I know his damned Quaker priggishness.

Ward. Oh! say! Remember, he's my uncle. And to tell the truth, my dear boy, this is a Quaker town, and you've just about turned it upside down. What with your drinking sprees, and your sprees with the girls, you've certainly worked up a peach of a reputation—a peach—of—a—reputation! I don't believe a single good concern in town would give you a decent berth, in spite of your family connections.

Will. But I tell you, Ward, I've got to get rich. I must do something.

Ward. Well, I'll tell you in two words what to do for a beginning.

Will. What?

Ward. Leave town.

Will. By G—d! I will!

Ward. Good!

Will. *[Moves.]* There! Check mate! What did I tell you? Mate in fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, *twenty* moves!

Enter JOHN.

John. Mr. Rogers to see you, sir.

Will. To see *me*, John?

John. Yes, sir.

Will. Why, I wonder what he's calling on me for. Now, if it were Jim.

John. He asked for Mr. James first, sir, but when I told him Mr. James was out, he asked to see you.

Will. Where is he?

John. In the hall, sir.

Will. Show him in here.

John. Yes, sir.

[*Exit John.*]

Ward. Well, I guess I'll move along. See you again soon.

Will. All right. Good-bye.

[*Exit Ward.*]

Enter ROGERS.

Rogers. Good morning, Will! Where's Jim?

Will. [*Meeting him and shaking hands.*] Good morning, Mr.

Rogers. Jim? He's out—driving.

Rogers. [*Surprised.*] Driving?

Will. [*Surprised at his surprise.*] Yes, he went out with Jessie Cole about an hour ago. Why, may I ask?

Rogers. Didn't he tell you he had an appointment with me?

Will. Well, come to think of it, he did say something about an appointment, but I didn't know it was with you, or that it was very important.

Rogers. It was, both. See here, Will, do you want to get rich?

Will. [*Starts.*] Do—I—want—to get—rich? Well, I—should—say—yes!

Rogers. Well, if you come in with me, we'll both be millionaires in a few years. But it will mean stick to it like h—l, and work like the d—l. Can you—or, rather, will you do it?

Will. [*After a pause, striking the table with his fist.*] Yes.

Rogers. I'll say this. I think it's in you. You have the determination that we need, to succeed. I had almost arranged with Jim. He was to sell out the gas stock for twenty-five thousand dollars and go in with me. But he's not business. He's been shilly-shallying with me for a month. I told him to call at ten this morning, as I was ready to settle it. Here he's put me off again, and gone driving with a girl. You're bad enough on the girl question, but I've watched you. If it were a choice between a girl and success, you would take success, I think.

Will. You're right. I would. Well, he's lost his chance, through his own foolishness, and to tell you the truth, I'm glad of it. He

had no right to sell that gas stock against my wish. What do you want me to do?

Rogers. Well, the first thing is, can you raise twenty-five thousand cash? I will put in seventy-five thousand. I must have a good man with me who will put in twenty-five thousand more.

Will. I haven't got it, but I might raise it through Uncle Nate, if it looks good. He thinks a good deal of me and might lend me the money. What's the proposition?

Rogers. A duty will soon be put on copper. I have inside information that it will be high. Copper wire is coming into more and more general use. No metal to take its place. The best wire is now all made abroad. When the tariff is put on, there will be several hundred per cent profit on the manufacture of copper wire, and with a hundred thousand dollar plant we can turn out about a million dollars worth of copper wire a year. I have an option on a factory building near Chicago. It won't take us long to get started. Here are the main figures. [*They sit down and study them a while.*]

Will. It looks good.

Rogers. All right. Get your twenty-five thousand and I'll take you in. But it must be done at once.

Will. I'll get it.

Rogers. Well, good-bye. I'll give you a couple of days. Let me know day after tomorrow without fail. Keep this, of course, a dead secret, unless necessary to help you borrow the money. [*Going.*] And, by the way, you can tell Jim, if you like, that our deal's off!

Will. Good! I will. [*Exit Rogers. Will sits down at chess table and rearranges men.*] I'll try that new gambit. Jim shall take the white. [*Moves several times.*] Yes, Jim, you made the first move—and I have taken your gambit. [*Moves.*] But here I think is check! What will you for that? Ah! My Queen! That leaves her exposed. [*Ponders over board.*] The question is—will he, or won't he take her?

Enter FANNIE.

Fan. Lunch is ready, sir!

Will. Hello, Fannie! [*Starts, stands up. Looks at watch.*] What! Noon already? [*Smiles.*]

Fan. [*Primly.*] Yes, sir.

Will. Come here, Fannie.

Fan. What for?

Will. I want to give you something.

Fan. [*Takes a step closer.*] What?

Will. [*Takes a stride toward her.*] Another——

Fan. [*Gives a coquettish little scream.*] Oh! nevaire! [*Runs out.*]

Will. Damn girls, anyway!

[*James and Jess heard laughing and talking without.*]

Enter JAMES and JESS.

James. Hello, Will! Lunch ready?

Will. [*Shortly.*] Yes.

Jess. Oh! he's cross. Are you mad, Will?

Will. No. What should I be mad about?

Jess. Because we ran off and left you. Of course you're mad. Old cross patch! [*Sings: Will is Mad and I am Glad, and I Knowe What'll please him*] [*Exit, taking off wraps.*]

Will. I suppose you think you drew first blood, eh, Mr. Gas Stock Seller?

James. [*Nonchalantly.*] Oh! Maybe so.

Will. Quite a lady killer, ain't you, with your college airs and dude stunts. I can't see how it is, if I haven't had your opportunities. Jess is dazzled at first. You're new. I'm a well-read story to her. But she'll get over that. I'm the one she will take—at the last.

James. I wouldn't be too sure of that. We had a very pleasant little talk this morning while out.

Will. You scoundrel! Do you mean——

James. Oh! anything you like.

Will. No! I won't be nagged into a row. I know her better than you. I know by her manner there's nothing serious between you—yet. But I've some pleasant news for you.

James. Yes?

Will. Rogers called while you were out.

James. [*Nervously.*] What did he say?

Will. Oh! told me the inside of a few things—about gas stock, copper wire, etc.

James. Offered you a job?

Will. No. He told me to tell you the deal was off.

James. God! And I gave Ferguson an option on that stock this morning while I was out. Stopped in at his office on the way to the park with Jess. I hope Ferguson can't sell. Can't get another investment like it in a thousand years. What's Rogers' deal off for? Can't he make it?

Will. Oh! he can make it, all right. But he's going to make it with another man.

James. Who?

Will. Me.

James. [*Scornfully.*] You?

Will. Yes, why not?

James. You're a fine strong reed for him to lean on. How many days a week will you spend at business? About two, if your record at the gas works counts. [*Suddenly.*] You're lying, anyway. He has more gumption than to take you for a partner. And then, where's your twenty-five thousand?

Will. Well, it won't be trust funds, anyway.

James. Trust funds be damned! Mother knows all about it and agreed to it, which is her privilege under the will. Anyhow, your goose is cooked. I guess I come in ahead of you on that deal. You haven't got the money.

Will. I can borrow it, I suppose.

James. You borrow it? Well, that's rich. Not on your face, your figure, or your reputation. Borrow it? Man alive, I wouldn't give two whoops in hades for the chance you have of borrowing twenty-five hundred, much less twenty-five thousand, dollars. [*Exit.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE. *As before. Afternoon. Jess discovered, in house gown, with pile of journals, day books, ledgers and small memo book; writing in one of the books. Enter Fannie.*

Fan. Mr. Ward, ma'am.

Jess. Show him in, Fannie.

[Exit Fannie. She returns and ushers in Mr. Ward.]

Enter WARD.

Ward. Good afternoon, Miss Cole.

Jess. How do you do, Mr. Ward. Won't you sit down?

[He sits down near her.]

Ward. Are you very busy?

Jess. Oh, awful!

Ward. I didn't know you did bookkeeping.

Jess. I don't.

Ward. Well, what, why—

Jess. I'm only *playing* at it, to please mamma. She has a fad that every girl ought to learn something useful.

Ward. Useful?

Jess. Yes. Cooking, sewing, typewriting, or—bookkeeping. I chose bookkeeping.

Ward. Well, how do you like it?

Jess. Like—fudge!—I don't think!

Ward. I shouldn't think you would be much of a bookkeeper.

Jess. That's all you know about it, Mr. Superior! My teacher says I have a natural aptitude for bookkeeping. I hardly ever make a mistake in my additions and my last trial balance was only eight hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents out.

Ward. Only eight hundred and ninety-nine—

Jess. *[Eagerly.]* Yes! You see, I added in nine hundred dollars twice in one column, and made a mistake of one cent in another column.

Ward. Ah!

Jess. So you see it wasn't really a very bad error. Why, any bookkeeper might have made it!

Ward. Of course.

Jess. The trouble was, that once I had it made, it seemed to carry itself along into every old account in my books. The teacher told me that the best way to do was to puzzle it out for myself, and say! If I didn't chase that eight hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents through more'n about ten million dollars worth of figures, I'm another! Gee! Talk about looking for a needle in a hay stack!

Ward. [*Picking up small memo book out of pile.*] What's this? Your petty cash?

Jess. [*Snatching it away.*] Oh, No! That's my personal private ledger.

Ward. Oh! Excuse me! Keep your private accounts in it? Dress, candy, etc., eh?

Jess. No! Sh! I keep my own *private* secret account in it!

Ward. What's that?

Jess. It's an account I expect to keep until I am married, and then——

Ward. And then?

Jess. And then I'll take out a trial balance and see if it agrees.

Ward. With what?

Jess. Why, what does a trial balance agree with? With itself, of course. I'll see if its debits or troubles, agree with its credits—or happiness. [*Sighs.*]

Ward. Ah! Yes! Er—That reminds me, [*haltingly*] that I called—to—see you—this morning—ah. [*Stops.*]

Jess. I see you did.

Ward. With the object—

Jess. Yes?

Ward. Of asking you to marry me.

Jess. [*Laughing.*] Oh! Mr. Ward! This is so sudden!

Ward. [*Getting down on one knee and takes her hand.*] Miss Cole, you treat me with too much frivolity. I am in deadly earnest.

Jess. [*Pulls hand away, gets up and moves off a little way.*] Mr. Ward! Get up! What if Will or James should come in? I'd never hear the last of this!

Ward. [*Gets up and follows her.*] Jim or Will are nothing to me. Today must decide my fate. [*He tries to take her hands. She puts them behind her, smiling.*] Answer me, Jess. Will you marry me?

Jess. [*Laughing.*] Oh! Mr. Ward! Pardon me! I can't help laughing. Not because I do not appreciate you, but because [*hysterically*] Oh! Mr. Ward—you—remind me—of a—story, I read the other day in a magazine.

Ward. Oh! Very well, Miss Jessie. If you insist on insulting me, when I call with an honorable proposal of marriage—

Jess. Ah! Come now, Mr. Ward. Don't let's quarrel. We're such old friends. I think you are really the only true friend that Will has in the world. Believe me, I wouldn't hurt you for anything. But marry you! Why, you know I don't love you! Come now [*teasingly*], confess you were only joking!

Ward. [*Smiling ruefully.*] Ah! You witch, you! I don't wonder half the fellows in town are crazy about you! You can't blame me. But, well, that's over. You know my weak spot. I never could stand being laughed at.

Jess. Well, that's all right. [*Holds out her hand.*] Let's shake and make up, and still be friends!

Ward. [*Smiling and shaking hand.*] Agreed. But, Jess, tell me, confidentially now, who will it be? You've certainly stirred up trouble enough in this town, and as for these two young tigers, in this house, if they're not on the verge of war—then I'm no judge. You *will* take one or the other, won't you?

Jess. [*Softly.*] Yes.

Ward. Will it be Jim?

Jess. Maybe so! Maybe not!

Ward. Well, I for one, hope *not*.

Jess. [*Eagerly.*] Why?

Ward. Because Bess loves him.

Jess. Oh! I don't think so. If she did, she'd have told me.

Ward. She's too loyal to you.

Jess. [*Meditatively.*] It might be. I think she *likes* him.

Ward. She's over here a good deal.

Jess. Only when I'm here. [*Suddenly.*] Maybe she's interested in Will.

Ward. I don't think so. But say, Jess, you owe me something for the fun you got out of me. Tell me on the strict Q. T.—word of honor, I won't breathe a whisper—which will it be?

Jess. [*Puts finger on lips.*] Sh! You won't tell a soul?

Ward. Swear to gracious!

Jess. Well,—

Ward. Yes?

Jess. I—don't know!

Ward. Pshaw! [*Picks up hat and moves off.*] Well, I must be going. See you at supper time. Will invited me over. Good-bye, Jess. But mind this, there's trouble coming. Trouble coming. [*Exit.*]

Jess. Well, I guess I'll balance my private account book. [*Opens*

memo book and studies over it. Enter Bess, softly, goes up behind, puts hand over Jess's eyes; Jess gives a little scream.] Oh! Who is it? [Bess laughs softly. Jess feels hands and up arms.] It's Bess!

Bess. [Removing hands.] Good guess.

Jess. I'm so glad you've come! How are you, you darling?

Bess. Just fine! [They embrace.] How are you? What've you been doing?

Jess. Nothing much. Stirring up trouble, mostly.

Bess. You mischief, you! I know. You've got these two boys here on a string and you're playing one off against the other. But I tell you what, Jess, dear, you're playing with fire and tow, and some day there will be a blaze that may scorch you, my lady!

Jess. Oh! I'm not afraid.

Bess. Well, darling, watch out, that's all. But what are all these books for? Have you started up in business?

Jess. I'm learning bookkeeping.

Bess. Holy smoke! You're a daisy! What next, I wonder?

Jess. Oh! Bess! You can help me. Come here. [Sits down at table and takes memo book.] Here's a book I've got to balance.

Bess. Well, I don't know anything about balancing except in quadrilles. [Lifts skirt and takes a few steps.] Balance to partners! [Courtsies.]

Jess. Oh! Do stop and come and help me. [Mysteriously.] You would if you knew what it's about!

Bess. Would I? What is it?

Jess. It's—it's—a—secret.

Bess. A secret?

Jess. Yes. It's about a fellow.

Bess. Oh! [Comes closer.]

Jess. Two fellows.

Bess. Tell about it.

Jess. Well, I'm going to balance 'em up in this book and find out—

Bess. Which wins?

Jess. [Nods.]

Bess. [Throws hat up in air.] Oh! Joy! That's a new way on me! Come on! Come on! Come on! [Pulls up chair.] What shall I do?

Jess. It's easy. All you have to do, is write down what I tell you. Here's some trial balance paper and a pen. Now, write! Put "debit" on one column, "credit" on the other, and mark on top of this page "J. I. M."

Bess. [*Writes.*] O. K.

Jess. Now turn over the page and do the same, and mark this page "W. I. L. L."

Bess. [*Turns over and writes.*] O. K.

Jess. Now, let me think! First, we'll have to have a standard.

Bess. O. K.

Jess. Oh! Shut up.

Bess. Don't bookkeepers always say O. K.?

Jess. No, they don't. Now this is serious. We must have a standard to judge them by, like they do at dog shows.

Bess. That's right. I saw 'em judging a couple of bull pups once, and they made a lot of marks in a little booklet, just like this!

Jess. Well, we'll do the same.

Bess. And then the pups had a fight.

Jess. Shut up.

Bess. And the one with the most points got licked.

Jess. Well, ours won't.

Bess. Maybe they will, who knows?

Jess. For land's sake, Bess, hush up, and let's get this started. I'm dying to see who will come out ahead.

Bess. O. K.

Jess. So we'll say that each good quality is to be judged by a standard of one hundred points, and every bad quality the same. Then we'll add 'em up, and whichever has the biggest credit balance, I'll—I'll—

Bess. Marry?

Jess. Maybe.

Bess. And I'll marry the other.

Jess. Oh! Will you, honest?

Bess. Maybe.

Jess. All right! Begin! Take Good Looks first. Credit Jim for Good Looks [*ponders*] ninety. Will, one hundred. [*Bess writes.*] Got that?

Bess. O. K.

Jess. If you say O. K. again, I'll throw this ledger at you.

Bess. Oh!—Don't!

Jess. For Dress. Credit Jim ninety; Will, one hundred.

Bess. O—[*Jess stretches out hand to book.*] Fudge! I think Jim dresses in much better taste than Will.

Jess. Well, you're not to be the judge.

Bess. Anyhow, I guess he can *bite* better.

Jess. I hope he bites you.

Bess. Oh! Please! Don't be so cruel.

Jess. Now, come on, hurry up! Let's finish it up and see how it comes out. Good Temper, Will forty; Jim fifty. [*Bess keeps on writing.*] Education, Will seventy. Jim, a hundred. Liberality, Will ninety; Jim, seventy. These are all the credits I can think of.

Bess. How about religion and—honesty?

Jess. Bess, I believe you mark them both up even on those two points.

Bess. Well, I can't think of anything else, either.

Jess. So now for the debits. I think Will's ahead, isn't he, so far?

Bess. [*Adds up to herself.*] Yes, he's ahead.

Jess. How much?

Bess. Never mind, how much. He's not very far ahead. Go on; we'll balance them when we get done.

Jess. All right. Now, let's see! Drink! Oh! Dear! Will is—

Bess. One hundred.

Jess. Do you really think so?

Bess. Certain. [*Writes.*]

Jess. And Jim is—

Bess. Aught, aught, aught.

Jess. I suppose so. It don't seem fair. He might have been fifty, or even twenty-five.

Bess. But he ain't.

Jess. No, he ain't.

Bess. So there you are. There's three big 0's for you, Jimmy dear.

Jess. Girls.

Bess. You mean women.

Jess. Yes, women.

Bess. [*Whispering.*] Bad women.

Jess. Yes; wicked ones, Jim eighty—

Bess. Nine.

Jess. Will ninety—

Bess. Eight.

Jess. I guess that's about right. Well, that's all the debits I can think of. Can you think of any more?

Bess. No.

Jess. All right. Add up. I'm afraid—

Bess. [*Adds up.*] Oh! Say! I know some more credits.

Jess. Oh! Do you? What are they?

Bess. There's dancing.

Jess. Goody! Now, we'll fix 'em. Will, a hundred; Jim, thirty.

Bess. Why, Jessie Cole! You cheat, you!

Jess. Bess, how dare you?

Bess. Why, you know just as well as anything that Jim dances perfectly.

Jess. Don't dance as well as Will.

Bess. Pretty nearly.

Jess. Not anywhere near.

Bess. Yes, he does, and you know it. You're nothing but a dirty old cheat. You want Will to be ahead.

Jess. Don't, anything of the sort. And I won't be called a cheat by you. The idea. Who do you think you are?

Bess. I don't have to think. I'm just as good as you, if you are so high and mighty, Miss Cole. I guess I have a few friends who think I'm all right, and at any rate I'm not such a miserable little old flirt and cheat as you are! So there!

Jess. Oh! Very well! You want a quarrel. You can have it. Don't speak to me again. You're a false friend. I—don't love you any more. [*Puts handkerchief to eyes.*] Leave [*sobs*] this house!

Bess. Oh! Darling! Don't cry! I don't want a quarrel. I was only joking. Come on. Let's make up. You're not a flirt, at least, no more than I am.

Jess. You said I was a cheat, too.

Bess. Well, you're not, sweetheart. Come on, you're not mad, are you? Give me a kiss. [*They embrace and sit down again.*] Will, one hundred, Jim thirty.

Jess. No, make Jim one hundred, too.

Bess. No, you said thirty.

Jess. I've changed my mind.

Bess. Well, I'm not going to give him a hundred. That wouldn't be fair either. Let's call it ninety-seven.

Jess. All right!

Bess. Now. Here's another. Go-a-head-ed-ness.

Jess. Fine. Will, one hundred.

Bess. That's no lie. Jim, eighty.

Jess. Five.

Bess. O. K. Health.

Jess. Will, one hundred Jim, sixty-five.

Bess. O. K.

Jess. Here's another. Manners.

Bess. The most important of all.

Jess. Will, one hundred.

Bess. Jim, thirty.

Jess. No; sixty.

Bess. Forty.

Jess. Fifty.

Bess. Compromise and call it forty-five.

Jess. Make it nine and I'll go you.

Bess. O. K. Forty-nine. What next?

Jess. I'm burnt out. I can't think of a thing more.

Bess. Neither can I.

Jess. All right. Add up.

Bess. [*Adding; sotto voice.*] Two hundred, three, forty-four, five. [*Aloud.*] Will, seven hundred and forty-two; Jim, nine hundred and thirty-eight.

Jess. Oh!

Bess. No! That's wrong. [*Adds up again.*] There, that's right. I've added them up seven times, and what do you think?

Jess. What? What?

Bess. They're both exactly alike!

Jess. Impossible.

Bess. Add 'em yourself. [*Pushes book over.*]

Jess. [*Adds.*] That's right! Well, I'll declare! Who ever heard of such a thing? [*Stamps foot.*] Darn the old bookkeeping, anyhow. [*Tears up book, and flings into fireplace. Throws the other books into a corner.*] I hate it! I'll never do any more again.

Bess. [*To audience.*] And all because the right man didn't win!

Jess. [*Throws herself on sofa.*] Bess, come here, dear. I want to ask you something.

Bess. [*Goes over and sits beside her.*] What is it?

Jess. Bess. I simply don't know how to choose between these two boys. Sometimes I think I will take one, and then, at other times, I think I will take the other. Did you ever see such a weathercock? But I've got to settle it now. I positively promised Jim I would decide in a few days, and I'm afraid if I put it off, much longer, there will be trouble.

Bess. There certainly will. I can *feel* it in the atmosphere. It's like electricity in the air, just before a thunder storm.

Jess. Well, dear [*coaxingly*], help me out. What shall I do? How shall I decide? You were engaged once. You know all about it.

Bess. [*Seriously.*] Yes, dear, I can tell you how to choose.

Jess. Oh, can you? Will you?

Bess. Yes! There is one sure and certain test, to which you can put them both, which will decide the question for you.

Jess. Oh! What is it? Tell me quick!

Bess. You have been trying to decide which was the better man, haven't you?

Jess. Yes.

Bess. Which would make the better husband?

Jess. Yes.

Bess. Measured by this or that gauge, you find that one is better in one way, the other in another, but summed up, as you did it,—in the strangest manner,—they both come out even, don't they?

Jess. Yes, dear.

Bess. Well, darling, all men are more or less bad and good. Composed of more or less virtue and vice. Averaged up, the mass of men are pretty much of a muchness. The real question for you to decide, dear—

Jess. Is?

Bess. Not who is the better man, or who will make you the better husband, from this or that viewpoint, but,—which, tested by the touchstone of your *heart*, is the one you love with all your being and soul.

Jess. Oh! Bess!

Bess. Yes, dear. Trust me, that is what you must decide. And what's more, not even your mother, sister, or dearest friend can really help you, at a time like this. The true fire burns clearly within. Feed it with the fuel of true love. Do not quench it, with a shovelful of dross!

Jess. I *feel* you're right, Bess!

Enter FANNIE.

Fan. Miss Cole, Mrs. York is sitting up and said that if you were not too busy, she would like to have you come and read to her a little.

Jess. Tell her I'll be there directly. [*Exit Fannie.*] I must clear these things up a little. You go up and see her, Bess. She'll be glad to see you. Tell her I'm coming.

Bess. All right.

[*Exit.*]

[*Jess begins picking up books and piling them in a corner.*]

Enter JAMES.

James. Say, Jess, I've been looking for you. I want to see you about something.

Jess. Is it important? Because I've got to go up and read to your mother.

James. Oh! Let her wait a while. See here, Jess, you remember our little talk in the buggy yesterday?

Jess. Of course.

James. Well, Jess, you told me to wait a few days. It's too hard to wait like this in suspense. Jess, why do you want me to wait? It's so easy to say yes.

Jess. Perhaps, when you've made up your mind.

James. All right. Make up your mind.

Jess. I can't, just now.

James. Oh! Jess! I will make you a good husband. Take me. You know I'm steady and dependable. I can't give you great wealth, but I can give you a happy home.

Jess. If I love you.

James. Well, don't you love me?

Jess. Sometimes.

James. And sometimes you love—

Jess. Your brother.

James. By heavens! He shall not have you. Jess, dear, do not trifle. Marry me and I swear I will make you happy. But for God's sake, put an end to this uncertainty. It is driving me wild. Tell me, dear, tell me you will.

Jess. I won't today, James, I simply can't. But I'll think it over and answer you soon.

James. When?

Jess. Tomorrow.

James. [*Going.*] Well, I suppose I must be content with that. But tomorrow, Jess, remember I shall insist on having an answer.

Jess. All right, Jim, [*Going*] I'll give you an answer—tomorrow!

[*Exit.*]

Enter FANNIE.

Fan. Mr. Ferguson, sir.

James. All right.

[*Exit Fannie.*]

Enter FERGUSON, shown in by FANNIE.

Ferguson. How's a' wi' you, Jeems?

James. Pretty good, Mr. Ferguson. [*Offers chair. Ferguson sits down.*]

Ferg. Thank ye. I've brought you over a check for that gas stock. The man took up the option you gave this mornin'. [*Hands check.*] Twenty-five thousand net, after deducting brokerage, etc.

James. [*Taking check.*] Thank you, Mr. Ferguson. It seems a shame to sell such good stock.

Ferg. Ay, but the purchaser is glad to get it! He thinks he's got a gold mine. Eighteen per cent deev dividends last year.

James. Well, it is a gold mine. Safe as a rock and four times what you get for city bonds.

Ferg. Aweel! 'Tis pretty good! It might be waur. But no so safe as you think—that's my opeenion, York, if you want it.

James. Oh, I know you've advised me to sell for sometime, but I can't for the life of me see why.

Ferg. I hae my doots o' its keeping up eighteen per cent deev dividends; that's all, laddie. I was your father's friend and financial advisor and he pretty generally took my advice, when it came to a question like this.

James. Well, now, I've followed your advice so far. What do you advise next?

Ferg. Aweel! I think you might do waur than take a few shares in that brewery trust that's just been formed in London. I got a letter today from an auld Scots friend over there, and he tells me that I can depend on its being a go. The breweries in it are all strong and have been paying twenty to thirty per cent deev dividends. There's a wheen o' silly fules that maun aye fill their bellies full of thin green beer. I don't drink it mysel. Old Scots whiskey is gude enough for me. But the beer business pays a good profit, laddie. You don't need to drink it. Just put your money in it. That's my advice.

James. Well, I won't decide just yet, Mr. Ferguson. I have another proposition on the string. I'll think them both over. I could hardly do it, anyway, without consulting Mother, and she's too sick to bother just now.

Ferg. [*Rising.*] Well, see her about it tomorrow, and let me know. Ye mauna let the money lie idle. If you don't like the breweries, I have a little plan about a street railroad I'll tell ye aboot. Goodbye.

James. [*Showing him out.*] Thank you, Mr. Ferguson. I'll let you know. Let me help you on with your coat. [*Exeunt.*]

Voices heard without. *Rogers' voice heard.* *James very effusively welcoming him.* *Enter Rogers and James.*

James. Come right in, Mr. Rogers. Take your things off. Give me your hat. How are you today? You want to see me about—something?

Rogers. [*Gives hat, but keeps on overcoat.*] Well, no. I want

to see Will. I leave town in half an hour, and there were one or two minor matters I wanted to see him about before I went. Is he in?

James. No, he's out. But he'll be in soon. Sit down and wait for him, won't you?

Rogers. [*Sits down.*] Thanks. I'll wait a little while. I haven't much time. [*Looks at watch.*] Only about fifteen minutes before I must leave for the depot. I'm going to Pittsburg to see about metal for the new factory.

James. Are things so far along as that?

Rogers. Sure! Hasn't Will told you?

James. Will's as close as a clam. I don't get much information from him. Besides, I didn't know that you made him a confidant of all your plans. Say, Rogers [*pulls out check*], here's the twenty-five thousand. Let's close up that deal, as first arranged. You haven't got a partner yet, have you?

Rogers. Can't do it, James. Everything's settled and closed up.

James. It is? Pretty quick work. Who's your partner?

Rogers. Will. He leaves for the factory tomorrow.

James. Will? Why, I thought you said you wanted a man who would put in twenty-five thousand dollars?

Rogers. Well, he has.

James. Will has? I can't believe it. Cash?

Rogers. [*Nods.*]

James. Why, where did he get it?

Rogers. [*Rising.*] Borrowed it, my dear boy. Borrowed it. On his note, without security. What do you think of that? Oh, I tell you your brother is wasted, in this small town. He is a born financier. He will make a name for himself. For all he's your brother, you don't know what's in him. He will be a great man some day.

James. Well, I know one thing. He certainly has the devil's own luck.

Rogers. No; he has what you lack, James, the most indomitable persistence. There's a will in that boy that brooks no crossing. He'll get there, like Napoleon, now that he has awakened to his power, if he has to wade through the wrecks of a dozen business empires. He's just the man I need for a working partner. But I must be going.

James. Wait a moment, Rogers. If all's settled about Will, as you say, let me in for some of your stock, anyway. Here, take

this check. Give me twenty-five thousand dollars worth of your common, at par.

Rogers. No.

James. At a hundred and ten.

Rogers. No, can't do it.

James. Hundred and twenty.

Rogers. [*Shakes head.*]

James. Fifty.

Rogers. No, I tell you. Not at five hundred. I won't sell a dollar's worth of my stock at any price, and Will is under contract not to sell any of his except to me. This is a close corporation. We are going to make money, and I wouldn't divide up with any one under the sun. I'm sorry to refuse you, Jim, but it's your own fault. You had your chance and missed it. Well, goodbye. Tell Will I'll write him. [*Exit.*]

James. Damn that brother of mine! He's ahead of me on that deal. He's got the shares and I'm in the soup. [*Enter Will unobserved.*] But I'll be hanged if I don't get the girl!

Will. Oh! You will, will you?

James. [*Starts.*] You here?

Will. May I ask to whom you were referring, just now?

James. You! Damn you! You! You!

Will. And Jess, I suppose.

James. Yes! You shall not get her. Don't you interfere with me in this! Or if you do, look out, that's all.

Will. Thanks for the warning, but as to that, I shall do as I please, and you may go to the devil.

James. Oh! I've a good mind to lick the starch out of you.

Will. Well! I don't feel like reverting to the stone age.

James. You're afraid, coward.

Will. Don't provoke me.

James. Pah! You're a mean, miserable coward. You cut me out in business deals, behind my back, and you're trying to do the same with the girl. Come on and have it out! I'll show you! [*Throws book in his face. Will grasps him by the collar. They struggle.*]

Enter Bess.

Bess. Oh! [*Screams.*]

They continue to struggle and fall against library door, which opens and allows them to fall in; then shuts. Sounds of fight inside. Enter Bess, Mrs. Wylie, Fannie, and John, running.

Jess. Why, Bess, whatever's the matter? Did you scream?

Bess. Hush! [*Points to door.*]

Mrs. Wylie. By all the saints, a fight!

Jess. Who is it? What is it?

Bess. Will and Jim.

Jess. [*Rushes to door and tries handle, but cannot open.*] Oh! Boys! Boys! Boys! Stop! Open the door! [*Beats on door. John tries to open, but fails.*] Oh! [*Wrings hands.*] What shall we do? This is dreadful.

Bess. Oh! I hope Mrs. York won't hear them.

Jess. No, it would kill her to learn that her two sons were fighting. It's too awful!

Door flung open with a bang. Will enters much dilapidated.

Will. [*Points into library.*] Call the doctor!

Enter WARD, hat in hand.

Ward. Well, by heavens. [*All rush into library except Will and Ward.*] What the devil have you been doing, my dear fellow? [*Will staggers. Ward puts arm around him. Exeunt.*]

Enter others from library, John and Wylie carrying in Jim. They lay him on lounge. Jess wipes his face. Bess runs and brings wet towel. Fannie brings glass of water. Jim comes to, dazed.

Wylie. And are ye feeling better now, Mr. Jim? John, we'd better take him to bed.

Jess. Yes, go along, John. Fannie, call the doctor. [*Exeunt John and Wylie with Jim. Also Fannie.*]

Bess. And so, the two bull pups had a fight? I told you so.

Jess. Oh! Bess! Don't! I wonder what it was all about.

Bess. I can tell you.

Enter FANNIE.

Fan. Mrs. York is awake, Miss, and wants to know what all the noise is about.

Jess. What did you tell her?

Fan. I told her I'd go and see.

Jess. Oh! Bess! You go and tell her something—anything—I simply can't see her, I'm too upset.

Bess. All right. I'll fix her up. [Exit.]

Enter WARD.

Ward. Well, well, Jess! This is a bad business. How is Jim?

Jess. Oh, he's better! But we've sent for the doctor. How's Will?

Ward. He's all right.

Jess. Wasn't it dreadful?

Ward. Pretty bad, pretty bad.

Jess. Oh! I wonder what it was all about.

Ward. Don't you know?

Jess. No.

Ward. Can't you guess?

Jess. What do you mean? Oh, surely not about—

Ward. About you. Just that. It seems hardly possible that two brothers, brought up together, would ever fight like that! But if they do, you might know it would be about a woman!

Jess. It's just simply dreadful.

Ward. Well, my dear Miss Cole, it was about what might have been expected. We've all seen there was bad blood between them for some time. Pardon me, if I say that you have been a little hard on those two brothers. It was more than flesh and blood could bear.

Jess. Yes, I feel I was wrong, but I just simply couldn't decide. Now I wish I were dead!

Ward. Tut tut! Brace up. Don't cry over spilt milk. I expect there's no great damage done, no bones broken, or anything of that sort. They'll get over it. Will will be down pretty soon. He's fixing to leave tonight.

Jess. What! So soon?

Ward. Yes. He was going tomorrow anyway. Now, he's decided to leave tonight. I'm going down to the depot to see him off. I must go back, now, tell him about Jim and help him with his packing. [Exit.]

Jess sits down. Tries to read. Throws down book. Picks up embroidery. Can't work. Throws it down. Gets up. Walks to and fro, restlessly. Enter Will, dressed, carrying suit case. Throws down suit case, goes out and re-enters, putting on overcoat.

Jess. Oh, Will! Are you really going tonight?

Will. Yes. John's hitching up. I've said goodbye to Mother. I'm so sorry she's too sick to see me off. Keep this scrap from her, if you can.

Jess. I surely will.

Will. And now, as to you and me, Jess. How about it? I'm leaving in a few minutes. Do you want to go along?

Jess. What do you mean?

Will. This is the last time I shall ever ask you to be my wife.

It's yes or no, right now, this minute. Either you're going to marry me, or you're not. Which is it to be?

Jess. Oh, Will! How can you ask me to settle a thing like that, in such a—jiffy?

JOHN puts head in at door.

John. Carriage is ready, sir.

Will. All right. [*Exit John's head.*] Come now, Jess; train's waiting. I must be off. Yes or no. If yes, come along. We'll stop at Chicago and get married. What do you say? Speak!

Jess. Well, yes.

Will. Darling! [*He embraces her.*] Hurry up, now, sweetheart! Get your coat and hat. We'll explain it all, and leave word for Mother, with Ward. She'll tell your mother, when Mrs. Cole returns tomorrow. It'll be all right. Even if I'm not an angel, they'll accept the inevitable, after it's all over. Mrs. Cole can send your things on to Chicago. We'll get anything, there, that you specially need for the next few days; so hurry up [*looks at watch*]; train's on time, and we only have ten minutes.

Jess. Such a man! Everything and everybody must move just the way you want it! Well, all right, Will, dear, I'll come. I'll be ready in five minutes. Mind—you don't go without me!

Exit Jess in a hurry r. Will exit c. Enter John dressed as coachman, picks up suit case and exit. Enter Jess, in hat and coat, carrying small bag. Stops, hesitates, lingers.

Will. [*Without.*] Jess!

She starts, picks up things; exit, c.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

Five Years Later.

SCENE I. *Will's luxurious apartments at the Plaza Hotel, on Fifth Avenue, New York. Will in bed asleep. Enter Simpson with service of coffee, and with several letters on tray, which he sets on table by the bed. He proceeds to lay out clean shirt, suit of clothes, etc. Finds bill. Looks at it. Puts in pocket. Takes out and places on the table near coffee. Will awakes.*

Will. Simpson.

Simp. Yes, sir!

Will. What's the time?

Simp. A quarter pahst ten, sir.

Will. Quarter past ten! And a meeting of the steel company directors down town at eleven. Why didn't you call me earlier, Simpson?

Simp. Why, you told me lahst night to call you at ten fifteen, sir.

Will. Oh! Last night! I was drunk last night, wasn't I?

Simp. Well, sir, you were a little hunder the weather, as you might say, sir.

Will. Under the table, you mean.

Simp. Oh, no, sir! Not that, sir.

Will. Well, I was damn near it. What time did you put me to bed?

Simp. At five o'clock this morning, sir.

Will. And I told you to call me at ten fifteen?

Simp. Yes, sir.

Will. Well, never pay any attention to me when I'm drunk, Simpson. Just do what you think's best for me. I know you're honest and I believe you're faithful. I won't forget you. [*Reaches out hand and picks up bill.*] What's this?

Simp. A fifty dollar bill, sir.

Will. Who put it here?

Simp. Hi did, sir. I found it hon the floor this morning, sir.

Will. Well, keep it. It's yours.

Simp. Oh, thank you kindly, sir!

Will. Invest it, or spend it. Don't save it. All this talk about

saving your money is tommyrot. Look at me. Here I am! A millionaire at thirty, and never saved a cent in my life.

Simp. Yes, sir.

Will sits up and tries to pour coffee into cup. Hand shakes so he spills it all over cup and saucer.

Will. I'm certainly in a deuce of a shape this morning. I must brace up for that meeting. Is my bath ready?

Simp. Your bath is turned on, sir. It'll be ready in a minute, sir. [*Will drinks coffee.*]

Will. Did I win or lose last night, Simpson?

Simp. Well, sir, judging from what some of the gentlemen said, sir, as they were leaving, I should say, sir, that you had lost a tidy little bit of money, sir!

Will. [*Picks up mail on tray and tears open.*] What's this? Bill for new auto; twenty thousand dollars. Hope it lasts longer than the old one. [*Throws it aside; opens another.*] Letter from Mlle. Saltarello; wants me to make her one of next party, on my yacht. Well, she's a friend of Belle's, and lots of fun. Guess I'll have her along. [*Tosses aside.*]

Simp. Oh, that reminds me, sir. Miss Stapleton called up a few minutes ago, sir.

Will. Yes.

Simp. I said you were asleep, so she said not to disturb you—that she would call in, about half past ten.

Will. That means eleven. All right, I'll drive her down town. [*Opens another letter.*] H'm! Hotel bill for last month. Twelve thousand odd dollars! Well, I'll be ———. What's this? H'm, h'm, h'm! Bar, ten thousand and eighty-five, ninety. Good Lord! Simpson, how is it possible to drink up ten thousand dollars' worth of liquor in a month?

Simp. Well, sir, special vintage champagne, burgundy and clarets, at six to twelve dollars a bottle, for the little parties you've been having this last month, soon counts up. I've been trying to keep track of it all, sir, so they wouldn't overcharge you, and I think that's about the sum, sir. But 'adn't you better be getting hup, sir?

Will. I guess I had; bring my bath robe. [*Simpson brings bath robe, helps him out; Will gets up.*] Now, Simpson, call up the garage and tell him to have my new auto here at eleven. It ought to make Wall Street in about five minutes. The old one did it in ten, and this has twice the horse power.

Simp. Yes, sir. [*Exit Will into bathroom.. Simpson goes to telephone.*] Madison four eight nine. Yes. Hullo! Are you

there? Is this the garage? This is Mr. York's valet. Mr. York says for you to please have his new auto at the hotel at ten twenty-five. Yes. Goodbye. [*Telephone bell rings.*] Hullo! Yes. This is Mr. York's apartment. No, ma'am, this is the valet. I don't think he's in, ma'am. I'll see. Who shall I say, please? Mrs. Sinclair? Yes, ma'am. Hold the wire, please, and I'll see. [*Enter Will partly dressed.*] Mrs. Sinclair, sir, wishes to speak to you.

Will. Sinclair, Sinclair! Now, who the dickens is she? Oh, yes! Cousin Lucy, who married that Chicagoo chap. Tell her I'm out!

Simp. Hullo! Are you there? This Mrs. Sinclair? Yes. This is the valet. Mr. York is hout. What? No! Not hin! Hout! Hout, I say! No! I cahn't say when he'll be in, ma'am. Yes, I'll take your message. Yes. [*Writes on slip of paper.*] Five hundred and two, west one hundred and fifty-third street. All right. Goodbye.

Will. What did she say?

Simp. She gave her address, and asked if you would be so good as to drop her a line, and make an appointment for her to call and see you on a little business matter. [*Hands paper to Will.*]

Will. H'm! Wants to borrow a thousand or so, I suppose. I've heard her husband got hit in the panic of ninety-three and that his affairs have been bad ever since. Poor Lucy! I always liked her. We had great times together, in the old days, in Muncie. But, no! I won't see her! I will not be hampered by poor friends and relations. I must be free to climb! Up! Up! To be king of Wall Street! Arbiter of the finances of the world! Simpson! If Mrs. Sinclair ever calls again, tell her I'm out of town. I don't want to see her, or hear from her. You understand?

Simp. Yes, sir.

Will. And anybody else, you don't know. Be polite, but give them no information or satisfaction. Keep them all away. I don't want to know any of them.

Simp. Yes, sir. [*Knocking heard within. Simpson exits and re-enters.*] A Mr. Ward, to see you, in the sitting room, sir.

Will. Ward! How'd he get in?

Simp. 'E says the clerk's an old acquaintance, sir, and as 'e said 'e was an old friend of yours 'e gave 'im the number of your sitting room and 'e came right hup!

Will. I'll bet that clerk loses his job in twenty-four hours.

Simp. He ought to, sir, and that's flat. Such hignorance!

Will. Tell Mr. Ward I can't see him. I'm dressing and have an appointment. Tell him to call at the office this afternoon. [*Exit*

Simpson. Will continues dressing. Attempts to fix shirt. Drops collar button.] Now, where's that collar button? [*Pulls things off dressing table, looks everywhere, kneels down, looks underneath, throws things around; enter Simpson.*] Simpson, if you go away again while I'm dressing I shall get myself another man. Where is my collar button?

Simp. Why, sir, it was right there a moment ago. [*Points to corner of dresser.*]

Will. It was there, but I dropped it.

Simp. Oh! [*He looks all around. Gets down and crawls behind dresser. They look everywhere. Finally Will steps on it.*]

Will. Oh! Here it is. [*Picks it up.*] Well, it's done for. Get me another and look sharp! [*Simpson opens a drawer, takes out box and extracts a collar button which he proceeds to put into shirt.*]

Simp. But, Mr. Ward, sir.

Will. Is he coming this afternoon?

Simp. 'E's still there, sir. [*Points to sitting room door.*]

Will. Still there?

Simp. Yes, 'e won't go away, sir. Says he cahn't possibly call this afternoon. 'As to leave town at once.

Will. Well, let him leave.

Simp. 'E says 'is business is more important to you than a directors' meeting and 'e'll wait till you're dressed and go down town with you, if you don't mind.

Will. But I do mind.

Simp. 'E hofferred to come in here and talk to you while you dressed, but I told him that was himpossible.

Will. Well, I'd rather see him here and be done with it, than have him tagging around with me afterwards. I guess you'd better show him in, but come back with him and finish dressing me.

Simp. Yes, sir. [*Exits and re-enters, showing in Ward. Then continues dressing Will.*]

Ward. [*Coming forward with hand outstretched. Effusively.*] Good morning, Will, old chap!

Will. [*Languidly.*] How do, Ward. [*Shakes hands.*] How's everything in Muncie?

Ward. Fine! Fine! You wouldn't know the place. Building up like everything. Pity you never run down to see what things look like.

Will. Too many folks there I don't care to know. I've outgrown that little burg and its burg-like ways. Been down there once, to look up some street railway business. Half the old codgers in town

slapped me on the back, called me Will or Bill, reminded me of my youthful escapades, and made out they were my best friends.

Ward. Well, I dare say some of them are as good friends as you'll ever get on earth, Will. [*Will looks at him frowning.*] Why, what's the matter?

Will. You'll oblige me by not calling me "Will." It's too puerile.

Ward. Oh! Excuse me. Want to be called by your hind name?

Will. [*Graciously.*] Oh, no! You may call me "William."

Ward. Oh, thank you, er—William. Sounds a little queer, but I guess I can get used to it. But to get down to business. [*Nods at Simpson.*] Can't we be alone, a few minutes?

Will. Why, we are. Oh! You mean Simpson? Why, he's nobody! [*Simpson looks surprised.*] Fire away! He's deaf and dumb. [*Simpson looks still more surprised.*]

Ward. But, it's about Jess.

Will. I don't care who or what it's about. Simpson knows all my family affairs. What I haven't told him, he's guessed at, [*Simpson looks guilty*] so go ahead, for I've only about five minutes to give you.

Ward. Oh! Very well. Jess has told me you want to divorce her, and as you have refused to see her, she asked me to call and try if I couldn't effect a reconciliation.

Will. No. I want an absolute divorce, and I'm going to get it.

Ward. But see here, Will [*Will frowns.*] Oh, well, William, then. Jess loves you. She may have been a little indiscreet, but I'll stake my life it was nothing serious, and you know it's not for the pot to call the kettle black.

Will. [*Angrily.*] Now, Ward, you may as well spare your breath. And don't come here to preach to me, because I won't stand it, even from an old friend like yourself. Jess disobeyed my commands, when I told her not to call on the Winslows, where she was sure to meet that fellow Cresswell. She did it, not once, but a dozen times.

Ward. But—

Will. She may have been true to me, but she has compromised herself with that fellow and I won't stand for it.

Ward. You are too severe with her.

Will. No, I'm not. I know what I want. I'll be liberal with her, though, for the sake of old times and the boy. I'll give her the home at Muncie and a million dollars cash, provided it's settled at once.

Ward. Goodness, man, you'll ruin yourself.

Will. Oh, don't worry, I have ten or a dozen millions left for myself.

Ward. And made it all in five years! It's wicked! There must be something wrong in our system, when one man can accumulate a pile like that in such a short time!

Will. Tut, tut! Quit moralizing. My time's limited in business hours. I get that sort of stuff on Sundays. How about this divorce question? You come here as Jess's representative, don't you? What do you say to my offer?

Ward. I'll have to consult her first.

Will. Well, consult her. There's a long distance phone in the other room. Simpson will show you. Call her up! I must know today. A million or a fight. It must be settled at once.

Ward. All right. [*Exeunt Ward and Simpson. Telephone bell rings. Will answers.*]

Will. Hello! That you, Bladworth? Yes. This is York. Muncie? Yes, I used to live at Muncie. Yes, I know about Muncie Interurban. Don't consider it safe. Why? Well, that's just my opinion. Yes, stock's up now; but—what do you know about it? [*Listens some time.*] [*Simpson re-enters and clears up some of the clothes and things.*] Uh! Huh! Yes! I know my brother controls it. He wants to sell the bonds? Well, I want to stop him. Yes. It can be done. Hammer the stock down; then no one will want the bonds. Do it today. Smash the whole proposition at any cost. I'll stand for it. See me on Wall Street at eleven thirty. All right, goodbye. [*Enter Ward.*] Well, did you get her?

Ward. Yes.

Will. Well, what does she say?

Ward. Oh, it was pitiful to hear her cry over the phone, nearly a thousand miles away, and not be able to comfort her! But she's very positive. She says she refuses, for the sake of the boy.

Will. Refuses! Well, what is she going to do?

Ward. She says she hopes that in time you will make it up and live with her again.

Will. [*Bringing fist down in hand.*] Never! I tell you, never! There's not the remotest chance that I will ever do any such thing and the sooner you make her understand that, the better, Ward.

Ward. But, William—

Will. I tell you, I know my own mind. You cannot move me by argument. I wish never to see her again. I expect to see the boy, as before, several times a year, or rather, have him come to see me. But with Jess, I am absolutely through, forever.

Ward. Well, all right. Arrange for a *decent* separation, without the stigma of divorce on your wife, self and child.

Will. [*More and more excited and positive.*] No, I tell you, no! If it were the last word I should say, before being paralyzed, I should still say no!

Ward. You must be thinking of marrying again. Are you?

Will. We'll not discuss my future plans, if you please. I may decide to marry again, and then, I may not. I am not inquiring what Jess proposes to do, after we are divorced. She might marry you, Ward. Eh? Might do worse than marry a lovely divorcee with money?

Ward. I wish to goodness she would! Jess is the only woman I ever thought enough of to give up my bachelor comforts for, and the longer I live, the more I think of her. But I can see clearly enough that I've no chance, though she likes me well enough. You're the only man she really loves, Will. She's been giddy, I admit, but good God! What a life you've led her!

Will. [*Waving all the talk aside.*] Listen here, Ward! I've got a lot of work to get through today. So let's come to an understanding. I have made Jess a most liberal offer—better than I believe the divorce courts have any record of. Oblige me by going straight back to Muncie and putting it very clearly before her. If she accepts, all right. Wire my lawyers and they will draw up all papers at once and communicate with me. If she refuses, well, it is war between us and I shall stop her allowance and take it into the courts.

Ward. [*Rising and taking hat.*] So that's your ultimatum?

Will. Yes.

Ward. Well, all I can say is, that I'm through with you. My boyhood friend Bill has gone to the dogs, and you have taken his place, [*scornfully*] William! I shall go back to Jess and tell her exactly what you say, but [*very emphatically on his way to the door*] if she decides to fight, don't for one moment suppose that you will have things your own way. Far from it. She has had you shadowed for over a year, and if the record of your life during that time ever comes into court, you'll stand a mighty poor show for getting a divorce from her—the decision, you may depend on it, will be the other way, and your future marriage, if you're thinking of one, will be impossible. Goodbye. [*Exit.*]

Will. Well, thank heaven, he's gone. I was afraid he and Miss Stapleton would meet. What's the time, Simpson?

Simp. Quarter to eleven, sir.

Will. She ought to be here soon then.

Simp. Yes, sir. [*Knock at bed room door.*] There she is, sir. [*He opens door on a crack, then opens wide, lets in Belle, who is dressed very strikingly, and exits himself. Belle rushes forward, throws arms round Will.*]

Belle. How's my great, big, bad Billy boy?

Will. Fine! How's my little beauty?

Belle. Oh, fine! [*Sits down on bed.*] Aren't you dressed yet, Mr. Lazy?

Will. No. Will be in a minute. By the way, Ward has just been in to see me, about Jess.

Belle. [*Eagerly.*] Does she agree?

Will. No.

Belle. [*Very disappointed.*] Oh! That's dreadful. What will she do? Fight?

Will. She may, and if she does—

Belle. She'll win, won't she?

Will. I'm afraid so.

Belle. Why don't you offer her big alimony?

Will. I did.

Belle. Offer more.

Will. I offered her a million dollars, cash.

Belle. Oh! If she won't accept that, she won't accept anything.

Will. No, I don't think she will. She has plenty of money anyway. Well, it's up to her now. I've done all I can. I've exhausted everything I can think of.

Belle. May be if you saw her—

Will. No. I saw her, you know, when she was here, a few weeks ago, and she wouldn't hear of anything. Said that for the sake of the boy she would not agree to it.

Belle. What did Ward call for?

Will. He came here to see if he could patch it up, but I made it clear to him that there was no hope for that.

Belle. What did he say?

Will. He said he'd tell Jess my final word and then leave it to her. So I suppose we'll just have to wait.

Belle. Yes. But it's awfully hard. This suspense is dreadful.

Will. Oh! Don't worry. We'll get up a yacht party and go away for a little while and have a grand old time with the crowd.

Belle. Yes, but Will, if she fights—and—if you're never—able to marry me?

Will. Well, then, we'll take another trip to Europe and enjoy ourselves like we did last time, won't we?

Belle. That would be perfectly lovely, but—

Will. But me no buts, you little nanny. Are you going to rehearsal today?

Belle. No.

Will. Well, come on down town with me, and after I've attended to business, we'll have lunch and then go for a ride in my new auto.

Belle. All right. I'll go on down and wait for you in the parlor. [*Kisses him.*] Hurry, now. Don't keep me waiting!

Will. I won't.

[*Exit Belle.*]

Enter SIMPSON.

Simp. The auto's waiting, sir.

Will. [*Looks at watch.*] Eleven o'clock. My coat and hat, quick! [*Simpson helps him on with coat, hands hat, opens door.*]
Exit Will. *Simpson begins to tidy up clothes. Curtain on scene.*

SCENE II. *Corner Broad and Wall Streets, New York.* [*Front drop.*] *Enter and walk past in succession, messenger boys, curb brokers, disputing about prices, etc. Excunt. Enter Will and Bladworth h. and r., meeting in center.*

Will. Ah! Bladworth. How are you making out?

Bald. Fine! Stock went down to nineteen. Nobody wanted the bonds. Your brother sold out all his stock and I bought it in, for you.

Will. Good! Then he's ruined.

Bald. He is? Your brother?

Will. Yes. He's my brother, but has been my bitterest enemy for years. Now I've got him beaten at all points.

Bald. But he got nineteen. So he isn't all to the bad.

Will. He had the stock hypothecated for twenty. So he's badly knocked out, I tell you.

Bald. Oh! Then he is a loser all right.

Will. Yes. Now, I'll see that mother don't help him any more, and he'll begin to take his rightful position in the world, as a dry goods clerk, or something.

Bald. But Mrs. York will help him.

Will. She can't. She hasn't a cent of her own.

Bald. She hasn't? I'm told she's got apartments at the Bellevue, that must be costing ten thousand a year.

Will. Yes, and *I* pay for them! She is surrounded with every luxury, and can buy anything she wants, but the bills come in to me; and *they are all paid by check!* She hasn't been able to give Jim a cent for over a year, and won't be, from now on.

Bald. Well, all I can say is you're certainly a good hater, Mr. York. I wouldn't like to have you for an enemy.

Will. Well, at any rate, I like to be on top. And now I'm there, and mean to stay!

Bald. Anything further for me to do, Mr. York?

Will. No. Not today. But I shall have something big for you to work on, pretty soon.

Bald. All right. You'll find me always ready. I never leave business. I guess I'll go on to my office now. Good day.

Will. Good day. [*Exit Bladworth.*] [*Apostrophizing Stock Exchange Building.*] Ah! There you stand, great Temple of Mammon, reared by priests and dupes of the Twentieth Century. There you stand, and overlook the scenes of your triumphs and orgies! You are new, in dress of brick and stone, but your soul is old—old as the age of man. Gold! Gold! Gold! Your rapacious maw ever cries for more, regardless of your victims' sufferings. What heartaches, what unhappiness, what broken homes, what murders, what suicides, what loss of hope in a hereafter, has the worship of your great god—Money—not caused the human race! Yes, there you stand, fair without, foul within, a monument reared by men's hands, to a religion that never dies—a religion that has more votaries, more priests, than any other religion in the world, whilst I, the high-priest of them all, sometimes wonder—why—why—why?

[*Bowes head and walks slowly out.*]

Curtain on Scene.

SCENE III. *A few months later. The corridor, Hotel Royal Poinciana, Palm Beach. A number of hotel guests seated and walking around, playing cards, shopping at the hotel booths, etc. Boys running to and fro, with telegrams. Telegraph booth at r. Men walk up to booth and send various telegrams, without counting words. Lady reporter walks around, making notes and sending telegrams. Telegraph girl primps between times and flirts with bell boys.*

Mrs. Oilby, Mrs. Stocker, Mrs. Runyan and Miss Singleton, all dressed very richly, in evening dress, discovered seated at table in front. The women talking volubly, all together, in loud, harsh voices, as curtain rises.

Miss Sing. One can see that you're a newcomer here, Mrs. Oilby, and that you haven't been much in society.

Mrs. Oil. Yes, Miss Singleton. You see, Colonel Oilby never did believe in me goin' much into society. And I didn't have much time, what with the housework, cooking, washing, and so forth.

Mrs. Run. But now that the Colonel's struck oil, you're going to take some time to enjoy yourself, are you?

Mrs. Oil. Yes. He bought me a ticket, gave me a check for dresses and expenses, and so I came down here for a while.

Mrs. Stock. Well, we'll show you around and tell you all about everything, won't we, ladies?

All. Yes!

Mrs. Oil. Thanks. Now, Mrs. Stocker, please tell me who these two Mrs. Yorks are, that you were talking about.

Mrs. Stock. One's the first and the other's the second wife of the millionaire William York—you've heard of him?

Mrs. Oil. Oh! Yes. I've heard of him.

Miss Sing. And how he divorced his first wife, gave her a cool million and married Belle Stapleton, the actress, in a week?

Mrs. Oil. No. I never heard.

Mrs. Stock. Well, he did. And after a trip abroad, brought her down here with seventy-eight trunks full of Paris gowns.

Mrs. Oil. Oh! I'd love to see them. Do you think I will have the chance?

Mrs. Run. Oh yes! You'll see them all, if you stop long enough. Don't worry. She puts on three or four new ones every day. And I've seen her telegraph for several new ones from New York since she's been here.

Mrs. Oil. She must be rather extravagant, Mrs. Runyan.

Mrs. Run. Extravagant's no word for it! And her jewels. You ought to see them!

Mrs. Stock. Gorgeous!

Miss Run. It's a sin, the money she spends on clothes.

Mrs. Oil. Well, you say she was an actress. I suppose there's some excuse for her.

Miss Sing. Oh! There's some excuse, but that's not it.

Mrs. Oil. How do you mean?

Miss Sing. Why, you see, what she is really trying to do, is to

eclipse Jess, the first wife, who came down soon after they arrived, and from the first attracted more attention than she did.

Mrs. Oil. So?

Mrs. Run. Yes. Every time that Belle wears a new dress, Jess wears a new one that beats it in beauty and taste.

Mrs. Stock. Knocks the spots out of her, every time.

Miss Sing. Oh! It's tragic, I assure you. Here is Belle with a husband and her millions to back her, and Jess comes down here, with no one but a lady companion, and puts her to utter rout.

Mrs. Run. Yes. Belle is simply crazy. If she don't manage to beat Jess in the end, she will do something rash, I'm sure.

Mrs. Stock. Well, if what my maid says is true, she stands some show of coming out ahead tonight.

All. Why?

Mrs. Stock. Why, her new gown she cabled to Paris for, has arrived and she's going to wear it tonight. I understand it cost one hundred thousand francs.

Mrs. Oil. [*Clasps hands.*] Oh, wonderful!

Miss Sing. Well, we'd better stay right here till they come, and we'll see the whole show.

Mrs. Stock. Oh, yes!

Mrs. Run. Let's do.

Mrs. Oil. I'd camp here all night to see them dresses.

Miss Sing. I wonder if the Count will be on hand tonight?

Mrs. Run. [*Scornfully.*] Of course.

Mrs. Oil. The Count?

Mrs. Stock. Yes. Count "Havvy" we call him. Can't remember his whole name.

Mrs. Run. He's a Hungarian nobleman, an admirer of Mrs. York's.

Mrs. Oil. The actress?

Miss Sing. Yes, and not the only one, either.

Mrs. Stock. No. They do talk about her most scandalously, for a woman in her position.

Mrs. Run. I wonder Mr. York allows the Count around.

Miss Sing. I think he's been getting rather tired about it lately. But, say, while we're waiting, ladies, what do you say to a game of bridge, before dinner?

Mrs. Run. Good idea!

Mrs. Oil. I'm afraid I can't play.

Miss Sing. What! Not play bridge? Let me tell you, Mrs. Oilby, your education has been badly neglected.

Mrs. Oilby. I expect so. But I just never seemed to have time.

Mrs. Stock. Well, you'll have plenty of time on your hands, down here now.

Mrs. Oil. Yes. There's lots to see here, but don't 'pear to be nuthin' much to do.

Miss Sing. That's why everybody in our set plays bridge.

Mrs. Stock. Yes, you see, when you're tired of all this style puttin on [*waves hand towards lobby*] and there don't seem to be nothin' to do, you can always have a real good, exciting time, in a game of bridge, specially if the stakes is wuth playin' for!

Mrs. Run. That's true. But somehow, the stakes don't seem to matter so much, these day. I can't get so excited about the game as I used to, a few years ago, before Runyan made so much money in New York.

Mrs. Oil. The time he advertised his little liver pills?

Mrs. Run. Yes. He used to tell me every night the amount of his sales of pills for the day.

Mrs. Stock. Did he sell a lot?

Mrs. Run. Sometimes more, sometimes less. Nobody could ever tell in advance.

Miss Sing. It must have been just like gambling.

Mrs. Run. It was. And after that, even bridge seems rather tame.

Mrs. Oil. Well, I believe I'd like to learn, and see what it's like, anyway.

Miss Sing. Oh, yes! Let's have a game now! I'll teach you!

All. All right! [*Miss Singleton produces hand bag, opens and extracts pack of cards; she shuffles; they cut.*] You must cut for partners and deal. [*Mrs. Oil cuts.*] Oh! You're my partner, sit over there. [*They change places to face partners. Mrs. Stocker is dealer, Mrs. Oilby leader, Mrs. Stocker shuffles, Miss Singleton cuts and Mrs. Stocker deals.*] Now, pick up your cards. They have to make the trump, or else they can play no trump. You see? Then, if you've got a good hand, you can double.

Mrs. Oil. Double what?

Mrs. Stock. Double the trump.

Mrs. Oil. The trump?

Mrs. Run. No, the trick!

Miss Sing. Oh, keep still, everybody, you're just getting her mixed up. You see, the dealer and his partner make a bridge.

Mrs. Oil. Ah! I see! That's why it's called bridge.

All. [*Excitedly.*] Yes!

Mrs. Oil. But how do you make a bridge?

Miss Sing. Well, I'm just trying to tell you. You understand if you double the trump, I mean the trick, the dealer, or her partner, may redouble, and then you or I may double again, and so on.

Mrs. Oil. What for?

Mrs. Run. Why, it's just part of the game. Do listen and keep still. We'll never get started, this way.

Miss Sing. No! Now, in the play of the cards, the ace is high and the deuce low.

Mrs. Oil. That's the way it is in poker.

All. [*Contemptuously.*] Poker!

Mrs. Stock. Then when we've doubled and redoubled, and so on, you lead; and we go on playing, till the tricks are all won.

Mrs. Oil. And whoever takes the most tricks, wins the pot.

Miss Sing. Oh, no! It goes by points. You see, you have two scores, by tricks and by honors. When hearts are trumps, tricks count eight, spades two, clubs four, diamonds six, and no trumps twelve; and doubling or redoubling increases the count accordingly. When hearts are trumps, three honors count sixteen, four honors count thirty-two, and so on. A little slam, adds twenty points and a grand slam—[*Grand slam heard outside as of table falling over. Ladies all scream and start up, overturning the table and cards. Enter bellboy, running, holding hand to ear and crying out.*]

Bellboy. Oh! He done hit me! He done hit me!

All. Who hit you?

Bell. Oh! The Count, the Count!

Mrs. Oil. Well, I reckon you needed it, or he wouldn't have done it. The Count is a perfect gentleman. Pick up those cards. [*Bellboy begins to pick up cards.*]

Enter Count Georg Aladar Havelka, in full uniform. He salutes and bows deeply to the ladies. They courtsey in varying degrees of ungracefulness.

Count. Oh! Good efening, beautiful ladies.

All. Good evening, Count!

Miss Sing. Won't you come and sit down? [*He strides forward. Bows again. Sees bellboy; makes a movement as if to hit him. Bellboy howls, holds hands to protect himself. Ladies scream.*]

Count. Your pardon, ladies. But that Tartar, Turk, Dog Brother, there! I play a game of chess with the Honorable William York; I beat him! I take his Queen, I am going to checkmate, when, Gott im Himmel! Potz tausend! Kreutz! Donnerwetter! Pfaff! He trip himself up on his big feet, fall against that table and slam!

bang! My game is spoilt! I hit him, the dog brother! [*He aims another blow.*]

Ladies. Oh! Don't, Count! [*He bows.*]

Mrs. Stock. You say you were playing with Mr. York? Was Belle there?

Count. His wife? Nein. I have not her, tonight, seen, except in the dining room. Is she not magnificent, this evening, not?

Mrs. Run. Belle really is showily beautiful, with all her warpaint on. She and Mr. York make a very handsome couple. But here they come. [*The Count leans eagerly forward.*]

Enter Will and Belle, she in evening gown, with diamonds. Will's hair has turned slightly gray. Everybody in corridor cranes their neck to see her. Telegraph operator much interested. Female reporter follows, noting down points of dress. The Count hurries forward, bows, holds chair for her to sit down. Will rather cold. The ladies turn up their eyes at each other.

Count. Good evening, Mrs. York. Such magnificence as you shed upon us tonight, turns all our heads, is it not, York?

Will. Some heads are easier turned than others, Count. It takes a good deal to turn mine, for instance.

Belle. I'm afraid you're a terrible flatterer, Count!

Count. Flattery, my dear Mrs. York, is an art not practiced by the Hungarian gentleman, the true Magyar. He speaks what he thinks, on the impulse of the moment, and if his words appear at times rather warm and passionate, remember, that the heart of the Magyar is not, like the American, encased in ice, but burns like a fire in his bosom, with the real artist's admiration, for all that is beautiful and magnificent.

Will. Especially for the ladies.

Count. Especially for—the ladies [*bows.*] In the theaters, gardens, and palaces of Europe, I have seen many beautiful women, but the most beautiful, most bewitching, most enchanting, of all her sex, I have seen, not in Buda-Pesth, not in Paris, not in Brussels, not in Europe, or Asia, but in the United States of America. [*Bows. Will makes movement of impatience. Looks at watch.*]

Will. You'll excuse me, Isabelle. I have an appointment, I shall have to keep.

Belle. At the club, I suppose. Well, don't gamble all night!

Will. If I did, it wouldn't cost me as much as some other extravagant expenditures I have to meet. [*Exit.*]

Belle. The brute! I know what he means. He means my last dressmaker's bill.

Count. [*Discreetly sympathetic.*] The expenditures of a beautiful woman, for adornment, cannot be called extravagance.

Belle. Why, I haven't spent five hundred thousand on clothes and jewels this year. What's that to one of the richest men in America? Oh, Count, those miserly millionaires! How I despise their meanness!

Count. My dear Mrs. York, pardon my plain words, but what can you expect from a man, who thinks of nothing but money? It becomes to him his God! His idol! He can think and dream of nothing else. He hears not the angel voices of music, he sees not the beauties of nature, of art, of fair women. The paradise we live in, is nothing to him, but a gutter, in which to grovel for more gold. Ah, if we were only in Paris, and you were free! What joys and pleasures might we not enjoy together!

Belle. [*Pretending to stop her ears.*] Count! Count! You should not think such things, much less say them! But hush! [*Rising.*] Give me your arm. Here she comes. [*Anxiously.*] How do I look?

Count. [*Enthusiastically.*] Magnificent! [*They promenade. Talking and laughing heard without.*]

Enter Jess, surrounded by coterie of women and followed by crowd of men in evening dress. Jess in magnificent, rich and tasteful costume, with handsome jewels—a tout-ensemble that utterly eclipses Belle's costume. The two parties promenade, some of the ladies exchanging bows with Belle and the count, Belle and Jess icily unconscious of each other, yet evidently oblivious to all else. Telegraph operator much interested, mounts on stool to get better view. Female reporter trots around, examining and making notes about gown. The Count is tremendously impressed and stares with all his eyes. Belle notices this and turns green with jealousy. Exit Jess and party. Exeunt Mrs. Runyan, Mrs. Stocker, Mrs. Oilby and Miss Singleton, Telegraph operator puts up sign "Closed" and exit. Belle sinks into chair.

Belle. Beaten again!

Count. Never mind! Better luck next time.

Belle. [*Starts up.*] Oh! You really think she dresses better than me, do you?

Count. Well, ma mie! To tell the truth—

Belle. Oh, the cat! How I hate her; to come down here and flaunt herself and her child in my face and beat me, a show girl, at wearing clothes! But I'll show her! Come over here. [*Seizes Count's wrist and drags him over to telegraph booth. Reaches in,*

gets blank and feverishly scribbles several telegrams, which she tosses over to Count to read.]

Count [reading.] Redfern, Paris. Ship first steamer, one each afternoon and evening costumes, to cost hundred fifty thousand francs, each; Isabelle York, Palm Beach. To Worth, Paris. Ship first steamer, evening toilette de luxe for ball, to cost not less than three hundred thousand francs; Isabelle York, Palm Beach. To Lemonnaie, Paris. Send first steamer selected pearl necklace to cost one million francs; Isabelle York, Palm Beach. [*He shrugs shoulders; holds up his hands.*] Ma chère Amie! What will York say? [*She snatches them from him, rings bell on table frantically. Boy rushes in. She gives him the telegrams. He runs out.*]

She sits, he stands, silent awhile. Belle's mood changes. She smiles.

Belle. Is Hungarian a very hard language, Count?

Count. Not so hard as the English, ma chère.

Belle. English is easy.

Count. To you, yes. Ça ce comprends. Mais. . . . You see, my countryman is perhaps the best linguist in Europe. He knows Hungarian, the old language of the Magyars, the language of Arpád, the first great conqueror of Europe. He knows German. He knows French, the language of the courts, and he knows English, the world language. But of all these languages, I say to you, my dear Mrs. York, that your English the most difficult is.

Belle. [*Rather fondly.*] Teach me some Hungarian.

Count. Also! Where shall I begin?

Belle. What is your full name, in Hungarian?

Count. Graf Georg Aladár Havelka, Knight of the Iron Crown, Captain of the Castle, Chief of the Body Guard, Keeper of the Cellars.

Belle. Oh! My! I would never be able to learn all that! Now, tell me what your friends call you.

Count. Sometimes Georg, sometimes Aladár.

Belle. Haven't you a shorter name? A—a—

Count. A pet name?

Belle. Yes, a pet name.

Count. Jurko.

Belle. How musical! [*Lingeringly.*] Jurko!

Count. [*Taking her hand lovingly.*] Isabelle!

Belle. [*Gently.*] Georg!

Count. Ma belle! I love you. To me, you are the most beautiful, the most perfect, the most delicious woman in the world.

Come! Leave this cold millionaire, who loves you not. Come with me to Buda-Pesth. He will get a divorce. Then we will marry and I will give you rank and honor. You will queen it in my castles and be forever to me my star and adoration.

Belle. [Dazzled.] Count! Count! Don't tempt me! It cannot be. It is too late.

Count. Never too late to seek for happiness. Come, let us walk in the garden and I will tell you about Hungary. [*She rises. He offers arm, which she accepts and they exeunt.*]

Enter GUSTAVE, in pyjamas, rubbing eyes and crying.

Gus. Muddy! I want my Muddy! Muddy!

Enter WILL.

Gus. Fahdy!

Will. [Lifts him up in his arms.] Why, old man, whatever are you doing here?

Gus. Oh, Fahdy! I had such a nofful dream!

Will. Did you?

Gus. Yes. A benge tagger comed to my window and made such a awful face at me, and I finked he was goin' to eat me up!

Will. And what did you do?

Gus. Oh! I just woked up, fast as ever I tood, and runned down stairs to find my beautiful, lovely Muddy!

Will. But where was nurse?

Gus. Nursie was fast asleep. Oh! Fahdy!

Will. What?

Gus. Do you suppose the tagger gotter?

Will. No, she'll be all right. Now, I'll take you up to bed and you must go to sleep again like a good little—

Gus. [Suddenly, as if struck by a bright idea.] You be a elephunt, and carry me away fum him.

Will. Not tonight.

Gus. Oh, yes! *Please*, Fahdy! Cause the tagger may be gonod tomorrow. You may be gonod, too. You seem to be gonod away most all 'e time. Other little boys' Fahdies stay wif em all 'e time. Why don't you never not let me and Mahdy stay wif oo too?

Will. Can't be done, Gus, old man, but never mind, I'll be your elephant, for a little while and carry you off to bed.

Gus. [Claps hands.] Oh! What fun! Come on! [*Will puts him up on shoulder.*]

Gus. Get up! Elephant! [*Will cavorts around and romps with him.*]

Will. What's your room number, Gus?

Gus. [*Slowly.*] One, two, two.

Will. All right. Here we go! [*Exit with Gus on back.*]

Enter Belle, slowly and pensively, smiling. She goes and sits down in a chair. Enter Will, with Belle's telegrams, which he is reading. Looks up, sees Belle.

Will. What's this, Belle? Are you losing your mind? Just spent a million and a half francs on clothes and jewelry—and here are orders for nearly two million more. Do you think I'm the Shah of Persia?

Belle. You read these?

Will. Yes, I took that liberty. The new night cable operator in town didn't know your name and sent the messages back for the clerk's O. K. I happened to be there and saw what they were about, which is lucky for me.

Belle. You mean—

Will. I mean they shan't go!

Belle. I say they shall!

Will. No! The time has come to call a halt on this extravagance. I will not, I cannot stand for it. My resources are not boundless. You are spending more money on clothes than an empress. What for? You don't get as much for the money as some women with one-tenth your means. What's that you're wearing? That one hundred thousand franc Worth thing?

Belle. [*Snaps.*] Yes.

Will. Well, I've seen several gowns tonight that looked a damned sight better than that, and I'll swear didn't cost half what that did.

Belle. [*Between her teeth.*] Yes! You've seen hers! Hers! Hers! It's not the gown! You still admire the woman! You're getting tired of me. I've been your plaything for a while, and you're hankering after your old toy.

Will. Nonsense!

Belle. It's not nonsense. I acknowledge I've tried to outshine her. But in spite of your money, I can't.

Will. She always did have devilish good taste in clothes.

Belle. [*Starts up.*] Don't praise her to me! I hate her, she's shameless. A divorcee, to come and brazenly try to get you back. And you! You refuse to stand by me! You refuse to humiliate her! You won't spend a few paltry thousands to help me out-shine

her? I won't stand it! I will get even! I'll humble your pride, if not hers! *[Sweeps out.]*

Will. *[Sits down near chess table; lights cigar.]* Well, if women aren't the very devil! Hm! Well! She'll get over it. They all do. But it keeps a fellow's nerves on a hair trigger—what with wine, women, and Wall Street, and even down here, I don't seem to get the rest the doctor sent me for. I wonder why Bladworth has not wired me his daily report. He's always so punctual. We've had a hard tussle with that Harriman bunch. But I guess we've got things going our way. Hello! I believe I'll try that Hungarian gambit the Count sprung on me this evening. *[Edges up to table and begins to move pieces. Ponders.]* Here's where he took my queen! Darned if I can see how to prevent him.

Enter boy with telegram. He hands to Will, then exit.

Will. Ah! Bladworth's report. *[Tears open.]* What's this, from Miller, Bladworth's clerk? *[Reads.]* "Bottom dropped out of market. Bladworth has committed suicide. Your losses over ten million on steel alone." By God! I'm ruined! *[Holds head in hand for a minute or two, as though head hurt, then resumes cigar, seems to have difficulty in finding mouth.]*

Enter boy with note, hands to Will, then exit.

Will. What's this? From Belle? *[Opens letter.]* I can't see. *[Rubs hand over eyes and stares, as though blinded, then reads.]* When you get this, I shall be gone to Hungary, with the Count. Do not attempt to follow, as we go by a route that you would not discover, and in Europe, if you interfere, he will kill you. So good-bye." "So goodbye!" H'm! He did get my Queen. *[Wearily, passing hand over head.]* So! Goodbye! *[Picks up telegram.]* Here is ruin! *[Holds up letter.]* Here is disgrace! How many more moves, I wonder, before the game is over? *[Sits still a while; tries to get up but can't; rings bell.]*

Enter Bellboy.

Will. Send my valet.

Bellboy. Yes, sir.

[Exit.]

Enter SIMPSON.

Simp. Yes, sir.

Will. Help me up, Simpson. *[Simpson, greatly surprised, gives arm.]* I'm growing old, or something. My head and legs seem numb. *[They walk slowly out.]*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE: *Veranda of Will's country house on Long Island. Enter Will, in invalid chair, being pushed by Simpson. Will carries pad of paper and pencil. Left hand paralyzed, with fingers drawn up, clutching pad of paper. Right hand holds pencil feebly. Left side of face all drawn up, hair white—a wreck of a man.*

Simp. A lovely morning, Mr. York, sir. [*He cranes head over back of chair to see if Will answers, on the paper. Speaks a little louder.*] A lovely morning, I say, sir. I 'opes as 'ow this 'ere weather keeps hup, then you'll soon be getting better, sir. [*He cranes neck again. Will feebly writes. Simpson reads slowly.*] "No u-use 'o-p-ing." Oh! Beg your parding, sir! There's hevery use, a 'oping. There's lots of people that recovers from paralysis. The doctor said so. [*He cranes neck and reads.*] "Not when they're wrecks like you?" Wy! You're not a wreck, sir! You're 'ale and 'earty, yet, sir! Honly thirty-one! Quite a young man yet, sir! [*Will writes. Simpson reads.*] "Young in years, but old in experience. I've overdrawn my account in the banks of health, money friendship, and all I have left is you, my faithful valet, and friend." Oh! Mr. York, sir! Don't talk that way. You have lots of friends yet, sir. [*Will writes. Simpson reads.*] "And not one to see me here in a month!" Give 'em time, sir! I suppose they don't know where you are! Give 'em time, I say! [*Will writes. Simpson reads.*] Any news from abroad? Wy! Yes, sir. Since you want to know. The lawyers telephoned up a little while ago to say that Mrs. York had been granted a divorce from you and had married the Count. [*Will writes. Simpson reads.*] You're glad of it, sir. Well, Hi'm not, sir! I 'ope 'e beats 'er! But, see, Mr. York, sir! There's a lady and a gentleman a-coming up the drive in a carriage this minute! [*Will looks eagerly out.*] Now, who can they be, why it's, it's——

Enter JESS and WARD.

Jess. [*Running forward with outstretched arms.*] Will! Poor Will!

Ward. William, old man, how are you?

[*Shakes hands. Will writes. Simpson reads.*]

Simp. 'E says, not William, just Bill!

Ward. All right, old pal, anything you say, Bill! But what's this, Simpson? Can't he speak?

Simp. Can't say a word, sir. 'As to write hall 'is horders, and heverything! It don't seem right, sir, to see 'im cuss me out on paper, 'im as used to talk so strong and free sir.

[*Simpson wipes eyes with back of hand.*]

Jess. Poor, poor Will! We came to take you home.

[*Will writes. Ward reads.*]

Ward. He says he has no home.

Jess. Home is with me, Will! I heard at the Astor this morning about that horrid woman having got a divorce, and came right up to see you. Will, I have always been your true, wedded wife. My place is with you, now, more than ever, and if you will, you may come with me to *our* home in Muncie, and I will take care of you as only a wife can do.

Ward. Yes, Will, Jess wants you to marry her again; she has never ceased to love you and if you accept, you may yet live many happy years, with her and the boy. [*Will writes. Ward reads.*] You refuse to saddle yourself on her?

Jess. Will, dear! I shall not be happy, unless you do. You will be no burden. Far from it. The sorrow you have caused me, I freely forgive. I will never marry again, if I do not marry you. [*Smiling.*] Do not make me beg you, as you once begged me. Think of the boy, Will, and then say yes.

[*Will writes. Ward reads.*]

Ward. He accepts! Good.

Jess. That's right! [*She kisses him, fixes his pillow, etc.*] And now, we will make all arrangements at once and start home this very afternoon. What will there be to do, Simpson?

Simp. Well, ma'am, I'll go down to the stable and put the horse into his carriage. We have an arrangement that lets us roll his chair up and fasten it to the seat, so I can drive him around. Very convenient, ma'am, I hinvented it myself.

Jess. You're a jewel, Simpson. You shall come, if you wish, and help us take care of him.

Simp. Just what I've been a-wanting to ask you, ma'am. Thank you kindly, ma'am. Oh, by the way, ma'am, 'e hought to ave a bit of broth before starting hout. The doctor said to keep him well nourished, and I halways fix him a cup of chicken broth, hevery day, at about this time.

Jess. Are you cook, too, Simpson?

Simp. Yes, ma'am.

Jess. Well, I'll cook for him this time, while you get the horse. Where's the stove?

Simp. It's in the next room, ma'am. And the can of soup is on the shelf. Can you open a can, ma'am?

Jess. Lordy, yes. Done it a thousand times in my younger days before I was rich—eh, Will? *[Will nods head.]*

Simp. *[Excitedly.]* Well, I declare! He hasn't done that since he had the stroke. You see, ma'am, you've done him good already. I believe he'll get well, now, after all! Won't you, Mr. York, sir? *[Will nods two or three times.]* There! You see? Well, I'll go on down and get that 'oss. *[Exit, whistling.]*

Jess. And I'll go and fix that broth, Willie boy! Mr. Ward, you look after him, won't you? *[Exit.]*

Ward. Yes. We'll amuse each other, eh, Bill, old pal? *[Will writes. Ward reads.]* Been fishing lately? Well, I guess. Do you know, I went fishing just last week, with Gustave, in the little old pool where you and I used to go when we were kids. Gus caught his first bass, and say! If he wasn't a proud kid! He calls me Uncle Teddy. *[Will writes. Ward reads.]* No man on earth you would rather have as an uncle for your boy? Thanks, old man, thanks! And if ever the day should come when he needs an uncle's or a father's care, you can rely on me! *[Will writes. Ward reads.]* You made me his guardian in your will, just after your second marriage? Well, Will, I'm glad of that. It shows there was no real hard feeling between us. Give me your hand, old chum. Say! But that boy! He's a great one. You ought to read the letter he wrote me yesterday to the Waldorf, where I've been stopping. If it isn't the brightest letter a kid of that age ever wrote his uncle! *[Will writes. Ward reads.]* Where is it? Let me see *[feels in pockets]*, I guess I must have left it in my overcoat pocket, in the carriage. I'll show it to you on the train. *[Will writes. Ward reads.]* Get it now? All right. I told the man to drive down to the front gate. I'll run down and get it. Back in a couple of minutes! *[Exit.]*

Enter JESS, apron on, sleeves tucked up, hair mussed, smudge on nose, busy look.

Jess. Where are those matches? Ah! There they are! *[Takes half a dozen from the mantel piece, kisses Will as she passes him and exit. Will, left alone, suddenly rouses up.Laughs, thickly and indistinctly, cries, makes supreme effort to rise, but fails.]*

Enter WARD, *he stands transfixed at sight of Will's face.*

WARD. My God! What is the matter? [*Will makes such nervous efforts to write that his letters are absolutely illegible. Ward endeavors to decipher them, but shakes his head. At last he reads one word.*] "Jess!" What? [*Will feebly moves head and points to door. Ward calls.*] Jess!

Enter JESS.

JESS. What's the matter? [*Starts and runs forward at sight of Will.*] Oh! He's ill!

[*Will makes attempt to speak. Ward puts ear to his mouth.*

WARD. He says he's dying

JESS. Oh! Poor Will! Oh! No! No! Not now.

Will strains and makes strange movements and sounds. Finally he seems, by sheer force of immense will power, to overcome the paralytic torpor, rises to his full height, raises right arm above head and enunciating, slowly, thickly and with difficulty.

WILL. Ah! God! It's over. All is now lost, indeed! What a mis-spent life was mine! I bartered my soul for gold, but gold gave me no real happiness and left me naught but dross!

[*Dies. Ward and Jess bend over him and mourn.*]

CURTAIN.

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